

The Comstock Communicator

COMSTOCK HIGH SCHOOL | COMPASS HIGH SCHOOL & ADULT EDUCATION | COMSTOCK MIDDLE SCHOOL
COMSTOCK ELEMENTARY | STEM ACADEMY | COMSTOCK EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY | COMSTOCK K-12 VIRTUAL ACADEMY



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MORE NEWS

Turn over to read
Center Point
A newsletter about the Comstock Community Center



From the Superintendent

Dear Comstock Community,

Happy New Year!

The new year offers us an opportunity to assess where we're at in our lives and where we might want to go. At Comstock Public Schools, we embrace change to better serve our students and prepare them for the future. I invite you to join us as we look ahead to the new year full of exciting changes that promise to be meaningful and lasting.

This year, we look forward to the continuation of needed renovations at our various school buildings. In August, for the start of the 2024-25 school year, Comstock Middle School's four-year renovation journey will come to an end. The school will be fully modernized, both inside and out, including air conditioning for the entire building.

At the same time, the renovations to Comstock High School's two-story educational wing and the science rooms as well as the band and choir room will be done with the kitchen upgrades being finished by October.

In addition, the much needed replacement of the high school's staff and visitor parking lot will be completed as well as the rest of the high school's roof repair and replacement. These projects, when combined, will bring a much needed facelift to our flagship high school facility.

In June, we will break ground and begin the construction of the new STEM Academy which will be located along East Main just past Comstock Elementary School. We will be announcing the

day and time of this event well in advance and will be inviting our entire community to attend. This will be the District's first newly constructed school building since Northeast Middle School opened in 1972 - long overdue!

Plans are also underway to launch the first cohort of Comstock High School's new Innovation Institute. This cutting-edge curriculum offering will allow students to earn a variety of credits through an integrated approach to learning. Stay tuned for more information soon about the content of the classes and the application process.

We understand how tough change can be when so much is at stake. Public schools are part of a social environment; its many facets influence one another. Together, we can forge stronger connections and lines of communication so that our Comstock community thrives.

In this issue, you'll find interesting articles that inform our community as to what's new on the horizon in school safety, athletic participation, and curriculum.

As we look forward to new directions, we will maintain the best practices at each of our schools and departments. As always, we welcome your input and volunteer efforts.

Stay informed. Get involved. It's a great day to be a Colt!

Sincerely yours,
Dr. Jeffrey Thoenes
Superintendent

Book Donations Needed for Little Libraries

The District's Little Libraries, located at each school, have been popular. But, we need to keep the libraries stocked.

If you or someone you know is interested in donating books, drop them off at your local school or at the Administration building located at 3010 Gull Road.

Most often, staff members stock the Little Libraries with books donated from the Comstock Township Library, but books also come from donations received from staff and members of the community.

Thanks for your support of this important and ongoing literacy initiative.



COMSTOCK PUBLIC SCHOOLS
A SCHOOL DISTRICT DEDICATED TO KIDS
www.ComstockPS.org

Dr. Jeff Thoenes
Superintendent

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Comstock Public Schools is to serve our community by empowering, inspiring, and challenging every person within the school district to reach their full potential, and to ensure all students learn and thrive in a safe and healthy environment.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Comstock Public Schools is to be an inclusive, high performing learning community where we foster dreams, explore possibilities, and create futures.

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions concerning your schools, the answer is only a telephone call away:
269-250-8907

STORIES OR INFORMATION

The Comstock Communicator is published by Comstock Public Schools. Information may be sent to Dr. Jeff Thoenes at Jeff.Thoenes@ComstockPS.org or by fax at 250-8908. It may also be e-mailed to Phyllis Rose at phyllisarose@aol.com.



@ComstockPS

Board Briefs

REGULAR MEETING

November 27, 2023

- Approved hiring Susan Park, Young 5's Teacher, CES.
- Discussed purchase of the Comstock Township Offices.
- Approved appointment of Pamela Dickinson to the Region 7 Board of Directors for the Michigan Association of School Boards.
- Moved into closed session to conduct a hearing on the discipline of a student.
- After the closed session, approved the board resolution to expel student #30500-9043.
- Moved into closed session to discuss attorney-client privileged communication.
- After the closed session, approved separation agreement for an employee.

REGULAR MEETING

December 11, 2023

- Recognized Students of the month:
 - Kingston Dooley, CELA, Pre-K
 - Levi Buell, CES, 5th grade
 - Arya Gupta, STEM, 4th grade
 - Camron Courtney, CMS, 8th grade
 - Maxwell Keith, CHS, 10th grade
 - Brianna West, CVS, 12th grade
 - Ja'Lexis Fuller, Compass, 12th grade
- Recognized Staff of the Month:
 - Shirley Gilland, CMS, Instructional Coach

- Approved hiring Amber Katkar, Teacher Consultant.
- Approved resignation of Amy Vliek, Social Worker, CES.
- Approved the following:
 - Thrun policy updates
 - Board Governance Guidelines
 - Policy Update Resolution
- Moved into closed session to discuss the Superintendent's Quarterly Evaluation.
- Moved into closed session to discuss the purchase of real property.
- Approved authorizing the Superintendent to begin the negotiation of the purchase of the Comstock Township Offices at 6130 King Highway.

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

January 8, 2024

- Elected the following officers:
 - President - Pamela Dickinson
 - Vice-President - Matthew Schreiner
 - Secretary - Saralyn Brown
 - Treasurer - Dori Scholly
- Approved the following:
 - Board Calendar
 - Board Governance Guidelines & Practices
 - Purpose, Duty, Authority
- Approved Standing Committees: Finance, Facilities, Academic Performance.

- Elected Support Officers
 - Executive Assistant to the Superintendent as Recording Secretary to the Board
 - Director of Finance is the day-to-day treasurer for the District
 - Executive Assistant to the Superintendent as Election Administrator
- Appointed Board Committees:
 - Facilities - Dori Scholly, Karen Howes, Saralyn Brown
 - Finance - Dori Scholly, Karen Howes, Paul Lamphear
 - Policy Committee - Saralyn Brown, Pam Dickinson, Dr. Richard Hathaway
 - Academic Performance - Pam Dickinson, Dori Scholly, Matthew Schreiner
 - Alternative Energy- Paul Lamphear, Dr. Richard Hathaway
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - Paul Lamphear, Pam Dickinson, Matthew Schreiner
 - Representative for Reproductive Health Advisory Board - Karen Howes
- Set Dates for 2024 Regular meetings as the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 6 p.m. at 3010 Gull Road.
- Designated the Superintendent's Office as the Principal Office.
- Authorized the recording secretary to post the regular meeting schedule at the Principal Office.
- Designated legal counsel as follows:
 - Thrun Law Firm, PC for issues including elections, labor law, and school law.
 - Miller, Johnson, Snell & Cumminskey, P.L.C. for employee benefits legalcounsel.
 - Miller, Canfield, Paddock, and Stone, P.L.C. as general counsel.
- Approved Borgess CorpFit as the District's medical provider.
- Approved various items related to District Finances.

REGULAR MEETING

January 8, 2024

- Approved Career Connect Campus CTE Consortium Agreement.
- Approved Innovation Institute job description.
- Approved CHS Roof Bid Package.
- Discussed Strategic Plan Priority Goals.
- Discussed purchase of Township Offices.

Comstock Community Auditorium Events

FEBRUARY:

- 3 Kazoo Fools-Seminar: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
- 8 Compass High School graduation: 6 p.m.; Rehearsal at 5 p.m.
- 10 Traci Phelps Dance Studios Competition Showcase: 2-3:30 p.m. Call Studio for details.
- 13-15 Education for the Arts: Cenicienta; Kalamazoo County area schools will attend. 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. shows. Not open to the public.
- 27 Comstock Elementary School Music Program K-2 grades. Doors open at 6 p.m.; Performance: 6:30 p.m.
- 29 STEM Talent Show: School Performance: Noon-2 p.m. Evening: 6:30-8:30 p.m.

MARCH:

- 15-16 Heritage Christian Academy Musical: *Cinderella*, 7 p.m. each night. Matinee also on the 16th at 1 p.m. Call the school for tickets: 372-1400. Tickets available online at: <https://www.hcaeagles.org>
- 21-23 Kalamazoo Christian High School Musical: *Once Upon a Mattress*, 7 p.m. each night. Matinee at 2 p.m. on the 23rd.- Tickets: Call: Kalamazoo Christian High School: 269-381-2250. Tickets available online: Tickets for *Once Upon a Mattress*
- 30 Run Kalamazoo-Colt Center: 7-11:30 a.m.

District Facilities Renovation and Construction Update

By Dr. Jeff Thoenes, Superintendent

Here is the latest news regarding the District's ongoing efforts to rebuild, renovate, innovate, and modernize its educational facilities.

Comstock Middle School Renovations

New Flooring for Kitchen Corridor - Thanks to the leadership of CPS Facilities Director Sean Gillette, over the winter break a crew from Battle Creek Tile and Mosaic Company removed the obsolete and worn out tile flooring leading to the kitchen and replaced it with resilient carpet planks that match the school's main hallway. The area is now fully modernized and looks much better than before.

We are grateful to our community for its support of the 2019 Sinking Fund that made this project possible!

New Light Poles at Comstock Middle School Gym Parking Lot

- In response to feedback from the Board of Education and members of the school community, the District installed three new light poles around the school's gymnasium parking lot over winter break. To accomplish this project, crews ran the electrical wiring underground and built three cement bases that hold the light poles. This work was funded by the 2022 Bond.

If all goes according to plan and when the fourth and final renovation phase is completed in August, 2024, both the interior and exterior of Comstock Middle School will be fully modernized and air-conditioned for the start of the 2024-25 school year.

Comstock High School Roof Repair and Replacement

- Over winter break, crews finished the first of two phases to repair and replace the school's aged roof. The cost of this extensive project was \$1.6M and was financed by 2022 bond funds. Phase 2, which will repair and replace the remaining sections of the school's roof, should begin in February or March and be completed sometime this summer. The estimated cost of this final phase is roughly \$1.7M.

Comstock High School Interior Renovations

- Crews began the "de-construction" or demolition phase in early November and, by the time this issue

goes to print, the Phase 1 rooms should be completed or nearly completed.

In similar fashion to the process used at Comstock Elementary School, sections of the high school that are under construction are walled off and accessible only to construction workers and architects. Students and staff do not have access to these areas.

The Phase 1 and 2 renovations include, but are not limited to, new flooring, lighting, ceilings, painting, electrical systems, and technology as well as new and larger lockers in the hallways; Phase 3 will focus on upgrades to the five science classrooms as well as similar improvements to other first-floor classrooms; Phase 4 will target major renovations to the kitchen and the redesigning of the band room.

Phase 1 will focus on the western half of the upper educational wing and will take about three months (November, 2023-February, 2024). Phase 2 will be the eastern half of the upper educational wing which is expected to take about three months (February-April, 2024). Phase 3 will consist of the science wing and other rooms on the first floor and is also scheduled to take about three months (May-July). During the summer of 2024, the work will focus on gutting and rebuilding the kitchen as well as the band and choir room adjoining the Colt Center.

STEM Academy

The STEM Academy design team has been meeting biweekly since September to design the new school which will be located on East Main just past Comstock Elementary School. The design process is on schedule with the floor and site plan substantially drafted. Currently, the team has placed the school approximately in the middle of the site with bus loop and staff/visitor parking north of the school and separated by medians.



Continued on page 5



WINTER WEATHER Notifications & Procedures

When wintry weather arrives in Comstock, we know that our families and staff are anxiously waiting to hear what our district has planned. If we make a change from our normal operations, we will try our best to share information by 6 a.m. If there is no mention of a delay or closure on our website or social media, Comstock Schools are running on-time, as scheduled.

Our first step will be to post notices on our website: ComstockPS.org



Next, we will alert WWMT and post a message on our Twitter feed: @ComstockPS

We will then send e-mail, phone call, and text messages using SchoolMessenger. Note that this process takes a little time; our phone system cannot call everyone at the same time.



Finally, we will share the message on our Facebook and Instagram accounts.



Continued from page 4

The playground and outdoor educational venues are located south of the school. The school itself will have a long hallway with three connecting “neighborhoods” heading south off of the main hallway. These neighborhoods will cluster grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8.



Note - these depictions represent a snapshot in time and are likely to change as the STEM Academy design team continues to work through the design phases.

The design process will continue until March when the team will finalize the design and put the project out to bid. The District plans to hold a ground-breaking ceremony sometime in May or June. Construction is scheduled to take about two years with the new school opening in August 2026 for the 2026-27 school year.

As always, thanks go out to our community for the 2019 Sinking Fund and 2022 Bond Funds that made these projects possible, our Board for their support and vision, as well as our Facilities Crew led by Facilities Director Sean Gillette, and partners GMB Architects, Miller Davis Construction Management, and AE Technology. Without the combined efforts and synergy of these groups, none of these critically important projects would be possible.

Birt Earns State Certification



Andy Birt, the District’s human resources coordinator, has earned his Michigan School Business Officials (MSBO) Human Resources Specialist certification.

The letter of notification sent to the District said, “This award reflects a high degree of academic and professional preparation established by the MSBO Board of Directors through our Professional Development Committee.”

CPS Receives Two State Grants

The District has received two state grants from the Michigan Department of Education.

The first grant is \$3,800 for the **Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Challenge**. This grant has been awarded for districts to participate in and implement activities known to drive FAFSA completion, which have been developed in collaboration with the **Michigan College Access Network (MCAN)**.

The second was a grant of \$26,559 for the **Additional Instructional Time and Interventions**. This grant is designed to assist districts with the cost of additional instructional time for students in grades Pre-K to 5 who have been identified as needing additional support and intervention to be reading at grade level.

CPS Food Service Re-Certified for Allergy Safety

With food allergies affecting one in 13 children in the U.S., Comstock Public Schools and its foodservice partner, Chartwells K12, recognize the critical importance of taking a careful approach to support students and families who manage food allergy issues every day.

As part of that challenge, the food service team of foodservice associates recently completed FARE-Check, a comprehensive food allergen training program certified by Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE), the world’s largest nonprofit dedicated to food allergy awareness, education, research and advocacy.

“Our team is always looking for ways they can improve the student dining experience,” said Holly Wait, Food Service Director. “Being fully informed on our allergy processes and procedures not only helps keep students safe, but it allows our team to make recommendations based on student restrictions and preferences to serve up happy and healthy meals every day.”

2023-24 Comstock Public Schools Calendar

February 22, 2024	CHS Conferences		
February 22-23, 2024	Mid-Winter Break		No Students/Teachers
February 29, 2024	Comstock Middle School Conferences	3:00-7:00	
March 12, 2024	Comstock Elementary & STEM Conferences	4:00-8:00 (CES) & 3:00-7:00 (STEM)	
March 14, 2024	Comstock Elementary & STEM Conferences	4:00-8:00 (CES) & 3:00-7:00 (STEM)	
March 15, 2024	DPPD 8:00-3:00		No Students
March 22-29, 2024	Spring Break		No Students/ No Teachers
May 2, 2024	CHS Conferences	3:00-7:00	
May 19, 2024	Comstock Middle School Conferences	3:00-7:00	
May 27, 2024	Memorial Day		No Students/No Staff
June 3,4,5, 2024	Half Day Students K-12 (High School Exams)		Half Day Students and Teachers K-12
June 5, 2024	Last Day for Students/Records Day PM		Half Day Students AM/ Staff Records Day PM

District Safety and Security

By Dr. Jeff Thoenes, Superintendent

Without a doubt, the safety and security of our students, staff, families, and visitors are top daily priorities and long-term objectives for the Board of Education and Superintendent Team. Our school community has a right to feel safe and secure. This sense of wellbeing should extend to a variety of settings such as students attending academic classes and extracurricular events; teachers and staff providing instruction and fostering a love of learning; and Colt families enjoying musical concerts or cheering on the Colts to V-I-C-T-O-R-Y at athletic competitions. Every member of our professional staff is dedicated to this end and takes this duty seriously.

With this outcome in mind, it seems prudent to review the District's recent initiatives and grants, and our strategies for implementation that make our schools as safe and secure as possible.

2016 Bond Funds - Using funds from the 2016 Bond, the District installed a highly reliable and top-of-the-line school security camera system that went online at the start of the 2022-23 school year. Cameras are located throughout the District including in all common areas, hallways, and classrooms, as well as multiple exterior sites. The system has a number of advanced features enhancing officials' ability to deter, uncover, and identify inappropriate conduct. Since its introduction, this camera system has provided a wealth of information regarding events after the fact when typically little or no information would have been available otherwise.

School Resource Officer Grant Program - On January 17, 2023, Comstock Public Schools received notification from the Michigan State Police Grants and Community Services Division, Office of School Safety, that the District had been selected to receive \$200,000 as part of the School Resource Officer Grant Program (SROGP). According to the award letter, a panel consisting of representatives from education and law enforcement prioritized awarding the grants to schools without SROs. The District has pledged to match the award which lasts for three years.

As a result of this grant award, the District collaborated with the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department and hired 23-year veteran Deputy Sheriff Dori Noble to serve as the school resource officer. Deputy Noble began her tenure with the District in August, 2023, and has served primarily at Comstock Middle School and Comstock High School since that time. Deputy Noble has flexible hours and is able to be on duty in the afternoons and evenings on days when there are important public events.

State School Aid Act Section 97 Grant - Only a few weeks later on February 7, 2023, the District publicly announced that its application for the State School Aid Act Section 97 grant had been awarded in the amount of \$218,713. These monies made it possible for Comstock Public Schools to install two-way communication systems at each school's main entrance. The District has also used the funds to contract with Codenity, a security consulting firm that specializes in school safety. Codenity is lending its expertise to evaluate, update, and improve security systems and protocols at each of the District's buildings.

Codenity - Codenity is also assisting and advising the Superintendent's Team with the revision and improvement of the District's emergency response protocols and capacities at all three levels of need - a master plan for the District, a specific plan for each building, and classroom-level plans for each teacher. In addition, Codenity is lending its expertise to honing the District's evacuation, relocation, and reunification protocols in the event that students and staff in a particular school must leave their school due to an emergency.

State School Aid Act Section 97c Grant - In the fall of 2023, the District applied for and received funds from Section 97c to conduct safety assessments for each school in the District. The amount granted was \$2,000 per school or \$12,000 total. Using these funds, the District then employed a team of experts from Codenity to conduct the safety assessments and provide a detailed report. The team completed the safety assessments in September and submitted a detailed 147-page report to my office in late October. The District is currently working with Codenity to review and prioritize the findings. Any costs related to implementing the findings will be paid for by the aforementioned Section 97 grant.

Relay 12 - In November, 2023, the District began to have conversations with Relay 12. Relay 12 is an easy-to-use reporting tool that is available for our students on Chromebooks and other devices. Unlike other online reporting tools, Relay 12 is unique because every time a student submits a report, school staff are notified immediately. This means there is no lag time or delay common with other reporting systems that use a far-off central hub for receiving and sending the reports. As such, Relay 12 allows staff to address student issues and problems in a timely, expedient, and effective manner. We expect to have Relay 12 operational soon at no cost to the District since the expense will be covered by a generous grant from Wenke Greenhouses. Thank you, Wenke!

Public Act 103 Section 31AA Grant - In late fall, the Michigan Department of Education announced the availability of funding for school mental health and safety initiatives for the 2023-24 school year. As required in the grant, the Comstock Public Schools' Board of Education heard public comment regarding its proposed uses of the grant at its December 11, 2023, Board meeting. If awarded, the District would potentially receive more than \$400,000 in funding which it would use to support a variety of mental health programming and safety-related investments. As more details about this grant become available, I will update our community.

Hopefully, this column has clarified Comstock Public Schools' past, present, and ongoing efforts to help ensure that any and all the District's sponsored activities are as safe, secure, and successful as possible.

If you have any questions or ideas regarding how the District can improve any of its safety or security protocols, please contact me at your convenience. I look forward to the conversation!

Award-Winning Writer, CHS Grad to Speak at KVCC

Bonnie Campbell, a 1980 graduate of Comstock High School, will be speaking February 2 as part of Kalamazoo Valley Community College's "About Writing" Visiting Writers Series.

Campbell has written six fiction books, with her most recent book, *The Waters*, having been released in January, 2024. *The New York Times* Book Review said of this book that with a "ruthless and precise eye for the details of the physical world, Bonnie Jo Campbell presents an elegant antidote to the dark side of masculinity, celebrating the resilience of nature and the brutality and sweetness of rural life."

A previous novel, *Once Upon a River*, was a best-seller and has been made into a full-length feature film.

As part of the event at KVCC, Campbell will be doing a reading at 2 p.m., followed at 5 p.m. by a conversation with Haroula Rose, director of the film *Once Upon a River*. At 6 p.m., there will be a screening of the film.

Campbell has received a number of awards for her writing including the Guggenheim Fellowship for Creative Arts, US & Canada, Mark Twain Award from the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, Pushcart Prize, Eudora Welty Prize, Foreword Book Award for Short Fiction, and Associated Writing Programs Award for Short Fiction.

Her writing skills were evident during her time at Comstock High School. She served two years as editor of the award-winning school newspaper, *The Roundup*. During her tenure as editor, the paper won awards from both the National Scholastic



Bonnie Campbell (second from left in second row) poses with her 1980 Roundup staff at Comstock High School. Newspaper advisor, Phyllis Rose, is on the far right in the first row.

Press Association and the Michigan Interscholastic Press Association.

Retired teacher, Phyllis Rose, who was the school newspaper advisor at the time, notes that Campbell was among the top writers she taught during her time at CHS.

"It's exciting for me to see the success she has had as a writer," she said.

For more information about the event at KVCC, go to kvcc.edu.

Sports News

Hall of Fame Induction Banquet – Congratulations to Judy DeMink – Class of 1971; Jim Kordupel (posthumous) – Comstock Teacher 1980-2015; Lija Austrins – Class of 1990; Mara Austrins – Class of 1991; Sarah Thomas – Class of 2006; and Meghan Thomas – Class of 2006; for being voted into Comstock's Athletic Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame induction banquet will be held on Saturday, April 20, at the WMU Fetzer Center. Doors will open at 5 p.m. with dinner starting at 6 p.m. and the induction to follow at 6:45 p.m.

Tickets to this great event can be purchased from the Comstock Athletic Office for \$30. Come

support these great Comstock alumni and visit with family and friends. The deadline to purchase tickets is April 8.

Winter Sports Practice & Game Schedules – The Comstock winter sports practice and game schedules are posted at www.comstockps.org. You can hover over Athletics to find Practice Calendars and Game Schedules.

High School & Middle School Livestreamed Events on NFHS Network – Home High School and Middle School athletic events are being streamed on the NFHS Network. Go to

nfhsnetwork.com and subscribe to watch our home events in the comfort of your own home.

High School Spring Sports Start Dates & Physicals – High school baseball, softball, track & field, girls soccer and boys golf begin on Monday, March 11. Middle school track & field (6-8), girls soccer (6-8), baseball (7-8) and softball (7-8) will start the week of March 18. We will post dates and times on the main page of the athletic website. Each student athlete must have a physical on file with the athletic office in order to participate. The physical must be dated after April 15, 2023, to count for this spring.

Comstock High School

CHS Senior Receives KRESA Award



Senior Michael Howes was named the January Work-Based Learning Student of the Month.

CHS senior Michael Howes was named the January Work-Based-Learning Student of the Month by the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA).

KRESA reported that Michael was chosen by Scott Wills, Work-Based Learning Coordinator, who described Michael as a “dream student” who turns in assignments and time sheets on time and communicates effectively with his teachers.

Michael is in his second year of the program and is working for the Grounds Department of the Kalamazoo Country Club.

His supervisor Blaine Burch said, “He is an amazing student and one of the best employees we have. It is hard to find a work ethic like Michael has, and I hope he continues this career path in the future.”

Michael enjoys pursuing his passion through this program and hopes to obtain full-time employment at the Country Club.



Counselors, Dogs Comfort CHS Students

Having experienced the tragic loss of a classmate, Tristan Billman, over the holiday break, CHS students were comforted upon their return to school by counselors from Integrated Services of Kalamazoo (ISK) and handlers from Big Furry Friends Animal Assisted Dog Therapy.

Some students were also still experiencing emotional trauma from the shooting in the parking lot in December. With these two incidents, over 50 students sought counseling support.

Kim Marsh, CEO of Big Furry Friends, brought Cooper, a black English Labrador, to the high school. She was assisted by handler Les Freshwater who brought Guinness, a border collie, and handler Edward Hamlin who brought an English Springer Spaniel mix.

“On behalf of the Board of Education and Superintendent Team, we are grateful and appreciative for our community partners at both ISK and Big Furry Friends for helping our staff and students begin the healing and coping process,” said Superintendent Dr. Jeff Thoenes.



High school students pet Big Furry Friend “Cooper,” a black English Labrador owned by Kim Marsh, CEO of Big Furry Friends.

Students Tour School’s Construction Zone

Students in Ryan Cousins’ technology education classes at the high school recently toured the construction area on the second floor of the high school.

They were invited to tour the area by Nate Barton, project superintendent for Miller-Davis. Andrew Harma, project engineer, and Meg Gernaat, communications specialist, also assisted with the tour.

Miller-Davis provided students with protective helmets and high-visibility gear. Students observed classrooms in various stages of completion and also learned about the many opportunities available in the trades.

Comstock Middle

CMS Collects 380 Food Items

The Middle School Lighthouse Team, led by advisor Cindy Bloom, collected 380 canned food items for the Comstock Community Center. The students planned, organized and carried out the event. They also sorted and boxed the donated goods.

In a competition to see which class could donate the most, the winners were:

- Overall first place went to Mrs. Bloom’s advisory with 78 items.
- First place for 6th grade went to Mrs. Street’s advisory with 41 items.
- First place for 7th grade went to Mr. Thiel’s advisory with 68 items.
- First place for 8th grade went to Mr. Johnson’s advisory with 29 items.
- The winner for multi-grade advisories was Mrs. Cram’s advisory with 44 items.



Middle school students pack up canned goods to be donated to the Comstock Community Center.

Comstock Elementary

CES Students Spread Kindness

Elementary school students were challenged in December to spread kindness all around them.

Teachers Carynn Banner, Jessica Damer, and Elizabeth Heimann hid “Kindness Creatures” in their classrooms to keep an eye on the students - similar to the popular Elf on the Shelf. The “Kindness Creatures” would also challenge students to perform specific acts of kindness.

“Students were excited to search for the new hiding spot each day and really got into the kindness challenges,” said Ms. Heimann.

Some of the challenges given to students were:

- See how many compliments you can give out
- Thank a bus driver or pick-up helper
- Thank the cafeteria workers
- Spread some joy around the school and pass out a piece of candy to staff
- Thank the paraprofessionals who help you with reading
- Ask someone “How can I help you today?”

“It was amazing to watch our students spread kindness around like confetti,” said Ms. Heimann. “We are so proud of our students and all the good deeds they did for others throughout December.”

Her class alone gave out 1,093 compliments on one challenge day, she said.

“We always want to encourage others to be kind and what better way than to have a month full of kindness challenges,” she said.



Ms. Damer’s kindness snowman “Simon” was one of the “Kindness Creatures” keeping an eye on students and giving them kindness challenges.

CES Fall Book Fair Raises Funds for Library

The Fall Book Fair at the elementary school raised \$3,000 which will be used to update the school library’s nonfiction section.

Some of the funds were used to purchase popular books from the Book Fair such as *Miles Morales*, *Peppa Pig*, *Don’t let the Pigeon Drive the Sleigh*, and *Bad Guys*.

The top three books that sold out at the fair were: *Smart Cookie*, *Couch Potato*, and *Spidey Hangout Headache*.

The CES Book Fair Returns in March

Comstock Elementary School will once again be hosting an in-person Spring Book Fair from March 7 until March 14. In-person shopping will be available in the evenings on March 7, the Annual Literacy Night, and on March 12 and 14 during Parent Teacher Conferences.

The Book Fair will also be online until March 20 at <https://www.scholastic.com/bf/comstockelementarysch>.

If you would like to make a donation to the library, a teacher, or for a student, please contact Emmy Kimmer at elizabeth.kimmer@comstockps.org.

CES to Observe National Reading Month in March

Comstock Elementary School will kick off National Reading Month on March 7 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. The evening will feature guest readers, crafts, snacks, and this year it will be the first night of the school’s Spring Book Fair. March 7 is also the District’s Annual Literacy Night.

Be sure to visit the school’s Facebook page to see photos of the exciting things planned for the evening.

March is Reading Month was instituted on March 2, 1994 in honor of Dr. Seuss’s birthday. Dr. Seuss was the author of perennial favorite children’s books such as *The Cat in the Hat* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.



CES Students Donate Canned Goods

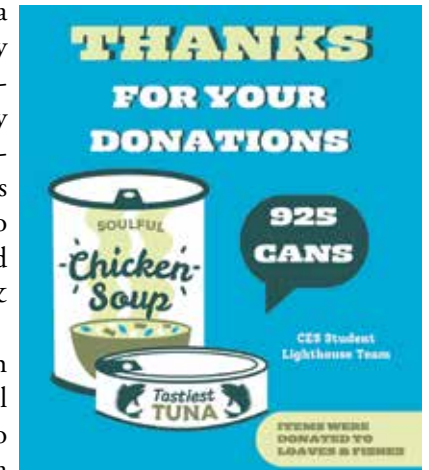
The Student Lighthouse Team at the elementary school led a community service project recently and collected 925 cans of food to be donated to Loaves & Fishes.

Each grade level competed to win a Pizza

Party for bringing in the most canned goods. Fifth Graders were the overall winners with 428 total items donated and as a reward were treated to a Pizza Party in January.

Runner up was the first grade with 214 cans. Helping to facilitate the project were teachers Kate Appel and Holly Verdon.

The Student Lighthouse Team represents students from all grade levels. In the past, they might have been called a student council. Students on the team meet and discuss problems, solutions, and ideas for special events.



Pastries with Pals Event Set for February 13

Comstock Elementary School will be having a Pastries with Pals event on February 13, at 7:45 a.m.

Students are encouraged to come to school with an adult “Pal” to enjoy a tasty pastry! Pals can be moms, dads, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or another trusted adult.

STEM Academy

Clarinetist Performs with Honors Band



Band director Chris Bergh and Jaden Palmore.

STEM Academy eighth-grade band student and clarinetist, Jaden Palmore, performed with the MSBOA District XI Middle School Honors Band at Plainwell's Performing Arts Center last fall.

Jaden was one of hundreds of middle school band students from nearly two dozen area schools who applied by submitting an audition tape.

The Honors Band spent the entire day at Plainwell High School rehearsing and preparing for a concert that night conducted by Mrs. Susan Gould, retired director from Greenville.

Deputy Reads to CELA Students

School Resource Officer Deputy Dori Noble visited CELA to read a book to the pre-schoolers. The book was *The Police 123's* by Donna Miele which tells about the work police officers do during the day using counting, rhyming, and chanting.



For support, Deputy Noble brought along a stuffed K-9 companion. She gave each student a pencil and a sticker.

STEM Academy Students Create Mars Rovers

While reading *A Rover's Story* by Jasmine Warga as part of the Global Read Aloud program, STEM fourth and fifth graders created their own prototypes of a Mars Rover.

Their guest teacher, Jimmy Welty, planned an engineering design session to create the prototype based on the details presented in the novel.

Students worked in teams to ask, imagine, plan, create, and improve their prototype within their criteria and constraints. Students used additional nonfiction classroom and library resources to help add details to their rovers such as *The Mighty Mars Rovers: The Incredible Adventures of Spirit and Opportunity* by Elizabeth Rusch.

By the end of the fourth day, student groups had completed their prototypes and were using BookCreator to create a digital book to either record or type in their story that accompanied their group's rover.

During fall conferences, families could view the rovers and use a QR code to read or listen to the story the students had written about their rovers.



Eva Johnson displays her Mars rover.

Comstock Early Learning Academy

CELA Hosts Family Days



CELA's Great Start Readiness Program classes hosted family days to celebrate cultures around the world. Families participated in talking circles where they described their holiday traditions. They also enjoyed healthy snacks and created projects.

Comstock Township Library News

FEBRUARY

All Ages

Wednesdays from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. – Family Game Night: Bring your own board games or use some of our own! The Library is open for families to come in and game with one another and new friends.

KIDS

Tuesdays & Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. – Family Storytime

Family Storytime provides an opportunity for caregivers to actively engage with their children, ages infant to five. Build early literacy skills in a welcoming environment through meaningful stories, songs, and play. Encourage a love of language and reading while practicing listening and cooperative tasks. Every session is followed by a sensory toy play time.

Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. – Drop-In Playroom

Back by popular demand, our playroom is open for kids to enjoy toys, puppets, and sensory tools.

February 13 & February 27 at 5 p.m. – Pages & Paws with Chloe

Read stories with Chloe the Therapy Dog! Do your children need to practice their reading? Chloe loves hearing stories and is a patient listener. Each child will have an individual session with Chloe. This program is first come, first served, so please check in at the Youth Desk to guarantee a session.

February 17 at 11 a.m. & 1 p.m. – Kids Crafts

Join us as we once again lead our elementary age children in fun crafting projects! Each Kids Craft has two sessions, one at 11 a.m. and one at 1 p.m. So be sure to register for the time slot that works best for you. Please register each child individually.

TWEENS & TEENS

February 1 at 6 p.m. – Pizza & Pages

Join our theme-based book club! Participants in third through sixth grades will eat pizza, discuss what they have read, and participate in an auction to end the hour. February's Theme: Read a funny book! Registration is required each month, and each child must register individually. And as always, audiobooks, graphic novels, and juvenile fiction are all acceptable reads for this program.

February 10 at 2 p.m. – Tween Craft: Painting Fun!

Tweens can join this common painting hour, where multiple projects will be available, such as canvases, Pop Sockets, ceramic planters and banks, and more. Supplies and ideas will be provided, but tweens are welcome to come with their own ideas and creativity as well. This program is free and intended for students in fourth through seventh grades only.

February 13 at 6 p.m. – T.A.G. (Teen Advisory Group)

T.A.G. meets once a month to brainstorm ideas for teen programs, suggest young adult books, graphic novels, and manga. It's a great way to earn volunteer hours. T.A.G. also helps develop marketable leadership skills, and gain experience you can use on your job, scholarship, and college applications. **Bonus:** T.A.G. participants get to attend special after-hours teen only events. Sound interesting? Are you a teen in grades eight through twelve? Then join us at our next meeting!

February 14 at 6 p.m. – Tween Hangout

Come hang out and bring your friends. Help us plan future Tween programs, while you enjoy games, crafts, snacks and other activities.

February 23 at 5:45 p.m. – Tween After Hours Nerf War

After the Library closes, battle between the stacks in this epic Nerf battle. Our battle will include snacks and refreshments, too! Personal Nerf guns are allowed that meet the following criteria: No automatics. No rival or hyper models. Only use darts as ammo. Hold no more than 10 darts. Please note: The Library is not responsible for any lost or damaged Nerf guns or ammo. You must register for this free program, and a parent or guardian must sign a waiver - found at the Youth Department desk - prior to drop off. This event is open to grades four through seven only. Please be at the Library by 5:45 p.m. The doors are locked at 6 p.m. No one arriving after 6 p.m. will be admitted.

ADULTS

February 7 at 6 p.m. – Charcuterie with Laurel Day, the Do Something Lady

Join Laurel Day, AKA the Do Something Lady, as she walks you through putting together the perfect

CURRENT LIBRARY HOURS:

Monday-Thursday 9:30 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Friday 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Contact us: 269-345-0136
info@comstocklibrary.org
www.comstocklibrary.org

charcuterie board for Valentine's Day. She will also feature samples from local vendors. **PLEASE NOTE:** This program is strictly for adults. No children to be admitted as attendees or guests. A valid Comstock Township Library card is required for registration. If you don't have a CTL card, but would like to participate, please call us at 269-345-0136 to see about getting a card before registering for the program.

February 14 at 5:30 p.m. – Author Visit with Bonnie Jo Campbell

Please join us as we welcome local author, Bonnie Jo Campbell, as she debuts her latest novel, *The Waters*. Ms. Campbell will enlighten attendees with her experience writing the novel, share and read an excerpt, and hold an audience Q & A. Light refreshments will be served. For more information on Bonnie Jo Campbell and *The Waters*, please visit her website at www.bonniejo-campbell.net.

February 19 through 24 – Adult Take-Home Craft: Lace Votives

Warm your home with this lace votive kit for the early spring season. **PLEASE NOTE:** Adult Take-Home Crafts are strictly for adults. Registration and pick-up occur during the same week for all take-home crafts. A valid Comstock Township Library card is required for registration. If you don't have a CTL card, but would like to participate, please call us at 269-345-0136 to see about getting a card before registering for the program.

February 29 at 5:30 p.m. – Adult Book Club: *Not Free, Not for All*

Please join us for a discussion of *Not Free, Not for All: Public Libraries in the Age of Jim Crow* by Cheryl Knott. This book explores segregation of public libraries during the Jim Crow South,

Continued on next page

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showing how African-Americans were excluded from public library services. Copies of the book will be provided at the Reference Desk. Snacks and drinks will be served. Registration and book pick-up began in January.

MARCH

All Ages

March 27 at 6 p.m. – The Solar Eclipse with Richard Bell

Join us on Wednesday, March 27, as we welcome Richard Bell from the Kalamazoo Astronomical Society. Mr. Bell will be speaking about the solar eclipse set to occur on April 8, 2024, what we can expect to view from Kalamazoo, and other fun bits of astronomy! Attendees will receive a pair of solar eclipse viewing glasses (strictly one pair per person) and are available on a first come, first served basis. Once free supplies are exhausted, Mr. Bell will have solar glasses available for purchase for \$3 a pair. All purchases will benefit the Kalamazoo Astronomical Society. We hope you will join us for this fascinating all ages event! Please note: Due to the size of the expected audience, the location of this event may be subject to change. Please visit our website and social media for up-to-date details.

Wednesdays from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. – Family Game Night

Bring your own board games or use some of our own! The Library is open for families to come in and game with one another and new friends.

KIDS

Tuesdays & Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. – Family Storytime

Family Storytime provides an opportunity for caregivers to actively engage with their children, ages infant to five. Build early literacy skills in a welcoming environment through meaningful stories, songs, and play. Encourage a love of language and reading while practicing listening and cooperative tasks. Every session is followed by a sensory toy play time.

Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. – Drop-In Playroom

Back by popular demand, our playroom is open for kids to enjoy toys, puppets, and sensory tools.

March 12 at 5 p.m. – Pages & Paws with Chloe

Read stories with Chloe the Therapy Dog! Do your children need to practice their reading?

Chloe loves hearing stories and is a patient listener. Each child will have an individual session with Chloe. This program is first come, first served, so please check in at the Youth Desk to guarantee a session.

March 16 at 11 a.m. & 1 p.m. – Kids Crafts

Join us as we once again lead our elementary age children in fun crafting projects! Each Kids Craft has two sessions, one at 11 a.m. and one at 1 p.m. So be sure to register for the time slot that works best for you. Please register each child individually.

TWEENS & TEENS

March 7 at 6 p.m. – Pizza & Pages

Join our theme-based book club! Participants in third through sixth grades will eat pizza, discuss what they have read, and participate in an auction to end the hour. March's Theme: Read a book from the lowest shelf. Registration is required each month, and each child must register individually. And as always, audiobooks, graphic novels, and juvenile fiction are all acceptable reads for this program.

March 12 at 6 p.m. – T.A.G. (Teen Advisory Group)

T.A.G. meets once a month to brainstorm ideas for teen programs, suggest young adult books, graphic novels, and manga. It's a great way to earn volunteer hours. T.A.G. also helps you develop marketable leadership skills, and gain experience you can use on your job, scholarship, and college applications. **Bonus:** T.A.G. participants get to attend special after-hours teen only events. Sound interesting? Are you a teen in grades eight through twelve? Then join us at our next meeting!

March 13 at 6 p.m. – Tween Hangout

It's time to take a load off gang! Come join us at the Comstock Township Library with your mates and relax. We'll discuss ideas for future tween programs, enjoy games, crafts, snacks, and other fun activities.

March 23 at 1 p.m. – Tween Craft: Bracelet Making

Join us in the Heritage Room for bracelet making crafts. All supplies will be provided, and this program is free. It is intended for fourth through seventh grade patrons only.

ADULTS

March 5 and 19 at 2:30 p.m. – CTL Writers

Have a bit of writing in your soul, but you need the encouragement to get it out? Join the CTL Writers! Twice a month, we get together to read over another member's work, then share a writing sprint to get the words out on the paper. Bring your laptop, notebook, whatever you need to get your words out. Light refreshments to be served.

March 18 through 23 – Adult Take-Home Crafts: Morse Code Bracelets

Manifest your own special, secret message with these Morse Code beaded bracelets! Please note: Adult Take-Home Crafts are strictly for adults. Registration and pick-up occur during the same week for all take-home crafts. A valid Comstock Township Library card is required for registration. If you don't have a CTL card, but would like to participate, please call us at 269-345-0136 to see about getting a card before registering for the program.

March 28 at 5:30 p.m. – Adult Book Club: *Hijab Butch Blues*

Please join us for a discussion of *Hijab Butch Blues* by Lamya H. In this memoir featuring essays, the author connects her experiences as a queer Muslim immigrant to stories from the Quran. Copies of the book will be provided at the Reference Desk. Snacks and drinks will be served. Registration and book pick-up begin Monday, February 26.

